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STATE CARE OF THE FEEBLE-MINDED.*

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Before entering upon the topic assigned me, I must thank you for the pleasure of meeting this association, and also for the privilege—most highly esteemed—of uniting in a work preeminently worthy of a State, the record of which is that of a builder and defender of homes.

Of the three classes demanding care and protection from the State—the insane, the defective, and the criminal—the first and last have for obvious reasons received earliest attention, and of the second, the blind and deaf mute have appealed most powerfully to the sympathies of the humane. Mental defectives have, therefore, been the last to be considered. Very inadequate provision has been made for them in the county homes, in asylums for the insane—with whom they are too often confounded—in institutions for the blind and deaf mute, whose methods in no wise meet their needs; or, sadder still, as innocent victims of neglect, they wander at large, the tools and agents of the vicious,

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multiplying their kind; or perpetrators of misdeeds for which they are in no sense responsible, they have been thrust into houses of correction or share with hardened criminals our jails and penitentiaries.

The rapid increase of this class, together with the opinion that science has been able to formulate from the accumulation of data in studies of heredity and of nervous disease, have made patent the fact that this great body of defects constitutes the main source of supply, increasing without intermission both the insane and the criminal ranks; a great reservoir, so to speak, drawing continually from the overflowing springs of a highly nervous age, and extending perpetually its own limits and those of the streams it feeds. The necessity to public safety for cutting off supply, or at least putting some check upon this evil, has become apparent to many thoughtful minds.

In entering upon the work just at this stage of its history, after its hundred years of experimentation and research, Virginia has the advantage not only of profiting by the experience, but of avoiding the mistakes of her sister States, and also of materially aiding a new era of work.

Within a decade, on the Continent, in England and, finally, in America, there has been a general awakening to the necessity of legislative intervention, not so much for the benefit of the abnormal, as for the protection of the normal portion of society. Experience, that best of teachers, has made it clear that the one great aim of the work is not cure—that is impossible; we cannot cure that which is defect, not disease—but a threefold protection;

protection of the helpless from want and suffering; of the irresponsible from ignorance, vice, and the penalty of crime; and protection of the family and the State from the evils of association and of certain increase. The work, therefore, takes a totally different trend from that of its beginning—makes a new departure, in fact. In place of gathering in from waste places or crowded alleys the defective, it consists in going into the schools; first, to separate the healthful from the defective growth, rank in all classes and hindering the progress of normal education; next, to provide for the defective that special treatment which shall arrest further deterioration and conduce to that limited development of which he is capable.

But the movement has not yet formulated its ultimate plans, and it is for those just entering into the work—you, the far South and Southwest and the southern countries of Europe—to lead in this by recognizing the importance, not only of separation and segregation, but of making this separation permanent, and of securing in the outset of your labors legislative action to that effect. If you do, I venture to prophesy you will soon be ahead of us who, in bearing the brunt of experimentation, have yet left for you to show a more excellent way.

Both Belgium and Italy, late in the field, are beginning on these lines at the instance, not so much of philanthropy, as of pedagogic science, the suggestions of superintendents of instruction receiving the countenance and support of the ministers of education. In Rome already is the second

step proposed of sifting out, after a sufficient period, the absolutely defective from the merely backward for special training, and of establishing there a national institution for mental defectives.

While this will be the natural drift in time with us also, the movement would undoubtedly be quickened by compulsory laws, were the public once fully awakened to its necessity through a consideration of statistics. Italy deplores that only about 1,000 of her 24,000 mental defectives are being cared for. Our very imperfect census reports gave, some ten years ago, 75,000 in the United States; unacknowledged and unrecognized, such as backward or epileptic children, then combined to swell the number easily to 100,000—and that before our recent acquisitions and annexations. Of this number not over 9,000 are gathered into schools and institutions, and they are subject to withdrawal at any time, the law not yet recognizing that this exercise of individual liberty affects the well-being and safety of many, or that a large proportion of those now dependent upon the bounty of the State are the innocent victims of a fateful heredity. Interested in this subject of causation, I have carefully studied 3,050 cases. One thousand nine hundred and seventy-eight, or 64.85 per cent. of these were due to causes acting before birth, and 835, or 27.38 per cent., showed a family history of idiocy and imbecility. Not even the much discussed causes of intemperance and consanguinity approached this, the former being only 136, or 4.46 per cent., and the latter but 41, or 1.34 per cent.

Surely this should be a forcible argument for

forbidding the return of the imbecile to the world and for assuring, by segregation and sequestration, that permanent good to society which best justifies the expenditure of public funds.

In thus approaching the subject from the standpoint of public utility, not only do you engage the attention of every good citizen by making it a matter distinctly his own, but, being forced to consider the greatest good to the greatest number, you avoid the mistake and danger of drifting into sentimentality so often attendant upon the viewing of one phase of an evil, thus cramping or dwarfing your own efforts. To explain: Legislatures have been in the past quite ready to vote public moneys for the housing of the comparatively harmless idiot whose helplessness appealed to their sympathies, while they were not so ready to provide for training and placing under guardianship the brighter imbecile who, destitute of will-power or the moral sense, was quite capable of murder, burglary and arson.

The result of such misconception has been the passing of a "managed" bill, setting afloat a mingled project of unmixable materials, a training school hampered with untrainables, an asylum run on needlessly expensive lines, the untrainable inmates crowding out those who, capable of improvement and of becoming useful members of community life, thus excluded from the benefits of the training school, remain a burden in the homes or a festering sore in society. This assuredly is not securing the greatest good to the greatest number. No, to attain this, society has to weigh its own

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right of self-preservation, its protection from contamination, and the rights of the mental defective to claim at our hands opportunity for the development of his feeble powers and that limited degree of happiness which he is capable of enjoying. Norway and Saxony are the two countries of Europe in which this is recognized—the law of compulsory education there applying also to the imbecile, a certain amount of oversight being given after training.

Of the three classes with which we deal in this connection, the untrainable idiot, the trainable imbecile, and the cunning and treacherous moral imbecile, the idiot is the least harmful and the one most easily disposed of. Insensible of the pleasures of the homes they burden, an asylum in which they may find care and kindly mothering is the solution of the problem for them. Absolutely untrainable, unimproveable often, even in habits of self help, they, whether apathetic or excitable, are equally indifferent to the ties of home or of kindred, and require but little besides attention to physical needs. A sufficient corps of capable attendants under experienced direction, and the daily inspection of a physician would meet these requirements. As there would be no necessity for teachers or school equipment, such an establishment could be run very comfortably on a comparatively moderate income. Idio-imbeciles and low grade imbeciles may be made useful in such asylums, as aids in household service and in the care of the helpless; and here, too, the adult imbecile, past the age for training, could find a peaceful life home.

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Very different from this monotonous routine is the atmosphere of a training school for imbeciles and backward children. Work and amusement and rest have a part to accomplish in the arousing of sluggish natures to new life. Here are five grades of human beings as distinct in characteristics as though they represented so many nationalities; and yet these differences often shade off and so commingle that only the eye of an expert may sort out and distribute them in such manner that each may go to his own place and receive that training which shall determine his life's work.

Thus, for example, experience has proved that the mental limit of a low grade imbecile is a preparation for the simplest menial occupations of house, farm, and garden. The middle grade may attain to a greater degree of efficiency in industrial service and in the manual work of the shops.

The high grade, approaching the normal and capable of the intermediate course of the public schools, may be fitted for yet more responsible occupations through the medium of the arts and crafts, and may be trained for musicians, cabinet makers, printers, carpenters, painters, typewriters, tailors, and seamstresses. These duties they enter upon as apprentices after development by means of special and varied occupations for years in the schools. Do not misunderstand me that our schools are trade schools. No. Rather do they partake of the industrial and manual training given in ante bellum days on the plantations, which were, in fact—as the world is fast coming to acknowledge—training schools for a backward race, many of

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whom were feeble minded. You cannot take a mental defective and put him to one thing or part of a thing without defeating your object and deadening instead of awakening his faculties. You can only fix the wandering gaze and chain attention by exciting interest, and that you cannot hold for long periods.

We must never lose sight of the fact that we are dealing with children, of whatever age: be it six or sixty years, they are still children, and the brain once wearied will not respond. Variety, however slight, effects the object, but there must be variety. Thus, the child comes from modelling in clay to modelling in wood, still studying form, but rested and refreshed by the change. So also in knitting, weaving, or blackboard exercises: he is doing number work all through, but unconsciously and unweariedly, because diverted. This whole scheme, gradually evolved through practice and then modified to meet new demands, may perhaps be made clearer to you by a tabulated form:

EDUCATIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF THE FEEBLE-MINDED.

		IDIOT.	
<i>Asylum Care.</i>	{	Profound { Apathetic Excitable	} Unimprovable.
		Superficial { Apathetic Excitable	
			Improvable in self-help only.
		IDIO-IMBECILE.	
		Improvable in self-help and helpfulness.	
		Trainable in very limited degree to assist others.	
		MORAL IMBECILE.	
<i>Custodial Life and Perpetual Guardianship.</i>	{	Mentally and morally deficient.	
		Low Grade—Trainable in industrial occupations; temperament bestial.	
		Middle Grade—Trainable in industrial and manual occupations; a plotter of mischief.	
		High Grade—Trainable in manual and intellectual arts, with a genius for evil.	

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IMBECILE.

Long Apprenticeship and Colony Life Under Protection.

Mentally deficient.
Low Grade—Trainable in industrial and the simplest manual occupations.
Middle Grade—Trainable in manual arts and the simplest mental acquirements.
High Grade—Trainable in manual and intellectual arts.

Trained for a Place in the World.

BACKWARD OR MENTALLY FEEBLE.

Mental processes normal, but slow and requiring special training and environment to prevent deterioration; defect imminent under the slightest provocation, such as excitement, overstimulation, or illness.

Now all this demands a great variety in the teaching staff—in reality a number of schools, and also good physique and originality in the teachers, variety of school material, room and ample space; in a word, a plant, and that is, of course, expensive. Now let us see if results justify expenditure.

A typical training school started with proper appliances, unencumbered by dead wood—adults, idiots, or even epileptics—and consisting of, let us say, 500 trainable imbeciles with a fair average of grades, ought, in from eight to ten years, to have its own force of laborers and artisans—working under supervision, of course—and thereby reducing expenses. This once attained, it could then supply asylums with aids or draft of members for independent colonies, if this arrangement could be made permanent by law; for just here comes the loose screw which makes the whole work truly “*imbecillis*”—tottering. We are working, first, to withdraw from society a pernicious element and to prevent its increase; secondly, to awaken deadened senses, to transfuse new desires into brutish instincts, and to give an aim to aimless lives. To accomplish this requires an atmosphere, first, of

comfortable living in accordance with hygienic laws; next, as I have shown, variety of occupation—work, rest, and amusement constantly alternating. Many thus trained enjoy the library, the theatre, gymnasium, or find their best recreation in the practice of drawing, modelling, or music, and, in association with refined people, have attained somewhat to a life of culture. Now all these things are proved necessities in our scheme of development, fitting the children for community life and making the talent of each contribute to the comfort or the pleasure of the whole, and sustaining and upholding it in so doing; compared with normal labor in the world, their work would not be of the same value. But friends come, and, dazzled by this bit of work or that accomplishment—unconscious of all that is lacking, unwilling to believe that it requires for the training of an abnormal child a period and labor four times greater than that for a normal one, or that they are incapable of withstanding fatigue or discouragement—they withdraw them.

Then the training which was a benefit to community life proves a menace to society. The almost certain result is marriage and increase; for imbecility is there, imperceptible to the public eye it may be, but unmistakable and transmissible and sure to reappear. The pains we have taken to train for useful community life have but intensified the danger to society and defeated our entire scheme—our work is nullified and increase goes on.

This is not all, for the same lack of legalized separation leaves another open door through which

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the criminal, rendered more expert by training, returns to the world.

I have told you of idiocy, of idio-imbecility and of three grades of imbecility, but I have not yet spoken at any length of that very peculiar type, the moral imbecile, found in all three, but chiefly in the higher grades, rendered tenfold more dangerous by his wit, his duplicity, and his close approximation, mentally and physically, to the normal, while lacking entirely in the moral sense. One is reminded by him of the house swept and garnished; for often into an attractive, almost a perfect, human mold—a fatal inheritance—one is willing to believe seven devils have entered, so varied are his gifts for evil doing.

In order properly to handle this type, found in most institutions for the feeble minded, custodial buildings are necessary. These should be fitted with every appliance for comfort, for exercise, and for free life within carefully guarded enclosures. Workshops and gymnasia should provide constant employment and vent for nervous energy, and amusements compensate for life separation from the world to whose peace he is a constant foe.

It is useless to preach reform—there is nothing to appeal to. The moral imbecile is as completely lacking in moral intelligence as the idiot is in mental. He simply loves darkness rather than light, because his eye is evil. In other words, he is "moral blind," just as people are "color blind."

Accomplished liars, adroit burglars and thieves, they steal, not from acquisitiveness, but for the excitement of successful thieving. This accom-

plished, the article, valueless to them, will be destroyed or thrown aside, often passing through half a dozen hands before it is traced and recovered. These are the characters who live double lives, such as one finally secured by the police this winter in one of our large cities. A partner in a reputable business firm, at his desk regularly by day—at night a successful burglar; he had for years been successful in eluding punishment. Much the same temperament and, I might say, genius, is evidenced in many of my boys; in one in particular, whose progress in school and persistent effort under difficulties led his teachers to trust him above others in his class, indeed in the care of school material he often proved in a quiet way an excellent detective. Suddenly an unforeseen accident brought about an investigation of his pockets, in which were found several bolts of ribbon. When questioned as to why he wanted to take such, to a well-grown boy of eighteen apparently useless, articles, he replied, coolly: "Oh, just to give 'em 'round." This was untrue, for it was proved that for months he had been stealing and scattering his pilferings through the woods or burying them out of sight. He had picked the lock of an attendant's room, broken into a strong box, stolen a clock and buried it. All this must have been accomplished very rapidly, for no boy can be absent long from his club without being subject to search and recall. Further investigation showed his influence over weaker boys to be so pernicious that, notwithstanding his capacity for training—he would in time have made an excellent carpenter—I was

reluctantly forced to remove him to a custodial building. Here he exhibited the same ability to ingratiate himself with the people in charge, and he then immediately proceeded to steal from them. His next escapade was successfully to plan an elopement in company with two other boys while they were exercising in charge of an attendant. Wandering on the streets of Philadelphia they were overheard discussing the possibility of a successful raid on a shop window, when a friendly policeman on the lookout for them made a counter raid and returned them to our care.

Here is a character ever on the alert for evil. If the opportunity is not presented, he creates it. He says that he would "set buildings on fire just to see 'em burn," and he would kill somebody "just to see the blood," and he is perfectly capable of planning successfully a conflagration or a brutal murder. Fortunately, he has been recognized as an irresponsible before society had to suffer in proving him such. Relatives may yet appear to claim him. And then what? He is a waif and stray with no mother's heart to break, as far as we know; but he is a fine-looking fellow with rather an attractive personality, quite sufficient to break other hearts; and there is no law of protection for either—no way or device except what the penitentiary would inevitably afford.

In the Pennsylvania penitentiary at the present time is a boy who, had he been recognized and early placed with us, would now be happy with comrades in a free life in the open, and his victim, the baby boy whom he first tenderly carried on

his shoulder into the wood and then murdered, would be living to-day, the joy of his home circle. I was called to examine him and to testify at the trial as to his mental condition, and have never known a case that appealed more to my sympathies. In this lad of fifteen were to be found all the stigmata of that degeneracy which both congenital and accidental causes had combined to foster. A family history of idiocy and insanity: the father an imbecile; the mother, the burden bearer of the family, had received a sudden shock at the time of his birth, and he himself had known all the diseases of childhood.

On entering his cell one day I found him crying bitterly over the torn dress of a paper doll. To his love for children and for animals the neighbors testified, and he told me of a squirrel that his sister wanted him to kill and how it looked at him with its bright eyes, and "Oh, I couldn't, I couldn't," he said. "But you killed Percy?" "Oh, yes," he replied, "that was different." Then he went on to tell of how they were playing "Wild West," and he held the knife open while Percy ran down the hill against it. Then how he stabbed him again and again until "he just stretched," and then getting scared he dragged him to the creek, piled large stones on him, and ran home, and, as evidence afterward proved, made the fire and got supper.

These are not exaggerations but typical examples of a class unrecognized or misunderstood. In two of these, society has paid a heavy penalty for ignorance and nonintervention; in the other, early

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sequestration has secured alike to the individual and to society immunity from ill. And clearly such lives must be protected from the world, and the world from them, their only true freedom lying in legalized detention and prevention.

The transference of the backward child from the schools to special classes must lead, after satisfactory testing, to a second and final sifting out from these classes, of those there adjudged defective by competent teachers and physicians. All such children should then be assigned to such institutions, public or private, as may meet special needs. *Received there under conditions dictated by science and already proved by experience as best insuring at once safety to society and greater freedom, and consequently greater happiness, to community life,* they should become the life wards of that or of any other institution to which, after training, they might be transferred.

What to do with the trained imbecile is already a question, and with increase of training schools reduplication of numbers will soon press home upon those in charge. The natural solution will be colonies which will relieve congested conditions and gratify the natural longings for change. Laborers and artisans, coming trained from the various schools, might be able to supply many of the needs of such colonies, and under a wise paternalism and supervision fill out their brief period of life work and life happiness and leave no remnant of ill behind.

Such a life the community of Shakers once enjoyed in the beautiful Genesee Valley; being celi-

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bates, they have passed and their settlement at Sonyea is now a colony for epileptics under State control. In the far West or on the Atlantic seaboard, in the mountains of your own State or the Carolinas, such a colony might be advantageously placed, and the national government, which is caring for the deaf-mute, the Indian, and the negro, might in this way provide for this race, more to be pitied, because more helpless than those upon whom so much has already been expended.